



Philosophy at Cambridge

Newsletter of the Faculty of Philosophy

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From the Chair

Tim Crane

Many readers will know that the British Government's periodic assessment of research quality in universities now involves an assessment of the 'impact' of this research on the world. In the 2014 exercise, demonstrations of impact were supposed to trace a causal chain from the original research to some effect in the 'outside world'.

It's hard to know how the 'impact' approach would have handled with the achievements of Bernard Williams, one of the Cambridge philosophers we have celebrated this year – in his case with a conference in the Autumn of 2016 on *Williams and the Ancients* at Newnham College, organised by Nakul Krishna and Sophia Connell (pp. 2 & 3). In numerous ways, Williams had an impact in the public sphere, and his work has profound implications for our understanding of politics. But it's hard to see how one could trace any of these effects back through a simple chain to one or two ideas.

Another example of a Cambridge philosopher who is still a leading public figure is Onora O'Neill, who has made significant contributions in public life, as well as developing a distinctive version of Kantian moral philosophy. How exactly we should trace the exact connections between her work in ethics and her work on, say, the Leveson Inquiry, is a difficult task, and not obviously the best way to think about her achievements. Fortunately, this did not bother the committee in Norway who awarded her the prestigious Holberg Prize earlier this year. We congratulate Onora on this wonderful achievement.

One way in which a philosopher can clearly and indisputably have impact, though, is through their students. Someone whose lasting legacy can be measured in



Onora O'Neill has been named the winner of the 2017 Holberg Prize.

Photo: Martin Dijkstra

this way is Casimir Lewy, whose life and work we celebrated at a delightful event at Trinity College in February (p. 6). The list of philosophers Lewy taught in his 30 years in Cambridge contains some of the leading philosophers of the last 50 years; and it is clear that they owed a vast amount to him.

Surely every philosopher wants their work to have impact of some kind – the only question is what this means. The truth of the matter seems to be that it is hard to predict or control which ideas have which specific effects, both inside and outside the academic context. By all accounts, the forthcoming assessment exercise (in 2021) is likely to take a more nuanced approach to impact.

Speaking personally, I do not expect to be around in Cambridge in 2021, though. Not only is this my last newsletter as Faculty Chair (a position I have occupied for five years and a bit), it is also my last term at Cambridge – I move to take up a job at the

Central European University in August. It's been an exciting period in the Faculty, with many new appointments and unprecedented success in acquiring research grants. It has been an honour to work in this great university, with its rich tradition in philosophy, stimulating colleagues and wonderful and talented students. The Faculty is very fortunate to have Rae Langton as my successor as Knightbridge Professor and Chair of the Faculty from 2017. As readers of this newsletter will know, Rae came to Cambridge in 2013 after teaching at MIT, Edinburgh, Sheffield and Monash. She works on ethics, feminism, Kant, philosophy of language, metaphysics and many other things too. Appointing Rae to the Knightbridge Chair – the first woman to be appointed to this ancient professorship – also gives us the opportunity, we hope, to expand and enrich the Faculty by making more junior appointments. Watch this space.

Togas and Olives

Nakul Krishna

"The legacy of Greece to Western philosophy is Western philosophy." The audacious first line – of Bernard Williams' essay, 'The Legacy of Greek Philosophy', strikes a characteristic note: considered, unapologetic, magisterial. And yet, as the reader discovers a few sentences in, the aphoristic punchiness is not achieved through exaggeration. Williams goes on to describe, in an account succinct but rich in telling detail, the relation between Greek and later Western philosophy so that his metaphor of a legacy proves to have a precision that A.N. Whitehead's better-known remark about Western philosophy as "a series of footnotes to Plato" lacks. Legacies can be squandered, but they can also be improved upon, and Williams – a modern philosopher through and through – never looked to the Greeks as sages.

Educated at Oxford in the late 1940s in what he once described as "the heyday of analytic confidence", Williams absorbed an approach to the study of Greek philosophical texts informed by 'triumphant anachronism'. The view that "we should approach the works of Plato as though they had appeared in last month's issue of *Mind*" was, of course, theoretically indefensible. Indeed it was barely intelligible; for one thing, the works of Plato could not have made it past the referees. But oddly enough, as Williams was the first to admit, the method *worked*, producing a generation of philologically and philosophically acute scholars who refused to patronise the texts and took them seriously as articulating arguments that we might accept or reject on their merits.

In the 1970s, Williams' thinking about the Greeks underwent a deep shift, in part the consequence of his own, increasingly pessimistic, ideas about what philosophy could do, in part the consequence of his growing fascination with Nietzsche. The Greeks, Nietzsche had more than once remarked, "were superficial – out of profundity". Nietzsche was not talking of the respectable philosophical Greeks who took their cue from Socrates and took virtue and wisdom as the way to happiness. The Greeks he most respected were the characters and creators of tragedy, history and rhetoric, even the teachers of rhetoric Socrates maligned as 'sophists'. For Nietzsche, as Williams put it, the



Detail from *The Remorse of Orestes* by William-Adolphe Bouguereau.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

modern world was lamentably Socratic in its "heightened reflectiveness, self-consciousness, and inwardness", and these things, Nietzsche had thought, "it was ... one of the charms, and indeed the power, of the Greeks to have done without."

When Williams was invited in the early 1990s to deliver the prestigious Sather Lectures at the University of California, Berkeley – later published as *Shame and Necessity* (1993) – he had a good deal to say about the Greek philosopher. But his real interest was in overturning, with every argumentative and rhetorical resource available to him, a certain 'Whiggish' interpretation of history. This interpretation saw the modern world and its philosophy as equipped with a set of notions – morality, responsibility and 'the will' among others – that the Greeks had lacked and been the worse off for lacking.

Williams denied this: the Greeks had all the notions they, or we, needed. A simpler philosophy of action, using only the terms available to Homer, could make all the necessary distinctions without muddying the waters with concerns derived from that unfortunate institution, morality (or, as Williams preferred to say, 'the morality system'). But one couldn't regain the pre-Socratic Greeks' profound superficiality just by trying. "That is not possible for us," wrote Williams, "after so much history: any such attitude for us will

be a different and more sophisticated thing, and it will represent an achievement."

A philosopher writing in the late 20th century, Williams assured his Berkeley audiences that he did not wish to ally himself "with those who suspect that the closing scenes of the *Eumenides* already display a dangerous weakening toward liberalism." (This is the scene where the frenzied Furies, figures of vengeance, are transformed into guardians of justice, with courts and procedures to go with their new role.) The point wasn't to do away with the achievements of the modern world in thought and politics in exchange for some slave-owning, toga-wearing, olive-eating and largely invented vision of a classical past. The point was to give us and our institutions a more truthful self-understanding, and learning to see the Greeks aright might be one way to do that.

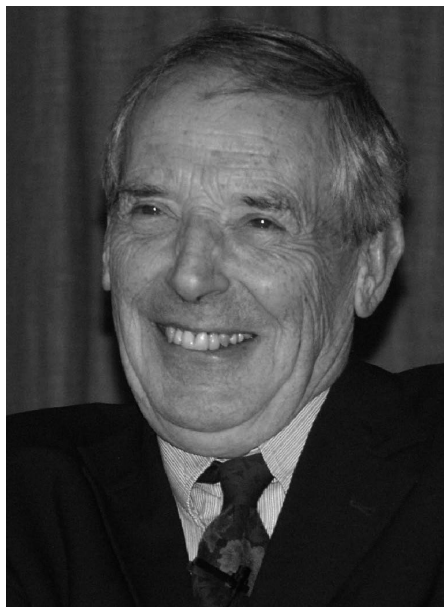
In his writings in the 1990s, Williams came to articulate with a startling directness the pessimistic reflections towards which he had been reaching in all his previous work: "human beings are to some degree a mess". Given our history – our natural, evolutionary, history as well as that of the last two or three thousand years of civilization – "no form of life is likely to prove entirely satisfactory, either individually or socially". We will always want more things than we can have, and this is

not just a contingent – if unfortunate – truth about the world, but a *necessary* truth about beings like us, cursed with desires and aspirations that cannot by their nature be jointly satisfied. And to the extent that we might simplify our desires so that they can be satisfied, our new existence may not be one we can recognise as an improvement.

Life, in other words, will always be a disappointment to us. This is a *tragic* insight, and Williams' writings on Greek tragedy – in particular, the tragedies of Sophocles – took this to be their most obvious achievement: "to offer a necessary supplement and a suitable limitation to the tireless aim of moral philosophy to make the world safe for well-disposed people." The world cannot be made altogether safe, or altogether undisappointing, for the kinds of creatures we are.

If this thought is unappealing to a rational mind, Williams thought, so much for the worse for rationalism. Where private life was concerned, Williams had written in an essay from the late 1970s ('Conflicts of Values'), most of us can survive a certain level of 'unresolved conflict'. But public life, with its demands of explicitness, transparency, and accountability, is harder to square with this level of conflict.

Still, no viable politics should try to resolve all conflict, because unresolved conflict is something we cannot do without in a life with any 'density or conviction'. It is, he thought, essential to any worthwhile life, and a worthwhile life – as he wrote in an astonishing remark that rewards re-reading – is the "kind of life which human beings lack unless they feel more than they can say, and grasp more than they can explain."



Bernard Williams.
Photo courtesy of Patricia Williams

But even if the world cannot be made altogether safe, there are ways to arrange it so that it is safer than the one Greeks inhabited – not just vaccinations and seatbelts, but a set of political institutions designed to insulate our lives from the worst kinds of rotten luck. In one of his more hopeful reflections – hopeful only by his own pessimistic standards – Williams noted that modern capitalist societies had nothing to be smug about when they reflected on the practices of slave-owning societies in the past. Just like them, he wrote, "we recognise arbitrary and brutal ways in which people are handled by society.... We have the intellectual resources to regard ... the systems that allow these things ... as unjust, but are uncertain whether to do so, ... partly because we have no settled opinion on ...

how far the existence of a worthwhile life for some people involves the imposition of suffering on others."

The 'we' is deliberately provocative. It is clear enough what the right-on thing to say is, but to what extent are those convictions reflected in the lives and lifestyles of those of us living, and sometimes flourishing, under capitalism? What would it be like for us to try to live in ways that imposed suffering on no one? Here, as always, there is the problem to which all of Williams' work is directed, "of distinguishing what we think from what we think that we think." And having done that, there is the task of designing and sustaining institutions adequate to our ethical commitments.

In September last year, I had the occasion to assist Dr Sophia Connell in the organisation of a conference at Newnham College that brought philosophers and classicists together to discuss themes in Williams' work that concerned the ancient world. As Professor M.M. McCabe observed in her keynote address, a great deal of Williams' scholarship is surprisingly elusive. The superficial provocation is rarely the point, and even the most straightforward of his claims can, with a little prodding, reveal hidden depths. His work continues to provoke, to shock, and to illuminate the dark corners of modernity and its classical past. As he put it in the closing lines of *Shame and Necessity*, he hoped above all that "we might move beyond marvelling at [the things that have survived from antiquity], to putting them, or bits of them, to modern uses." That task continues.

Nakul Krishna is a lecturer in the Faculty.

CFI Launch event

The Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence (CFI) was formally launched on 19 October 2016 with an event in the David Attenborough Building in Cambridge. CFI brings together four of the world's leading universities (Cambridge, Oxford, Berkeley and Imperial College, London) to explore the implications of AI for human civilisation.

Talks were given by Professor Stephen Hawking; Newnham alumna and AI pioneer Professor Maggie Boden; the Academic Director of the Centre, Bertrand Russell Professor of Philosophy, Huw Price; Zoubin Ghahramani, Chris Abell, and the Director of the Leverhulme Trust, Professor Gordon Marshall.

Wikipedia event on women philosophers

Wikipedia is disproportionately written by and about men, with only around 17% of notable profiles of women. Entries for women philosophers are often mere 'stubs', a few lines of information lacking biographical or philosophical detail.

As part of International Women's Day the Casimir Lewy Library hosted a Wikipedia edit-a-thon in partnership with the Cambridge Women in Philosophy group to help improve the representation of women philosophers and their ideas on the site.

An enthusiastic group of students spent a productive afternoon adding new entries on women philosophers and improving existing ones. Anyone can edit Wikipedia and help to address the gender balance and improve the coverage of eminent women in philosophy.

Against marriage: an egalitarian defence of the marriage-free state

Clare Chambers



Feminists have long criticised the institution of marriage. Historically, it has been a fundamental site of women's oppression, with married women having few independent rights in law. Currently, it is associated with the gendered division of labour, with women taking on the lion's share of domestic and caring work and being paid less than men for work outside the home. The white wedding is replete with sexist imagery: the father 'giving away' the bride; the white dress symbolising the bride's virginity (and emphasising the importance of her appearance); the vows to obey the husband; the minister telling the husband: "You may now kiss the bride" (rather than the bride herself giving permission, or indeed initiating or at least equally participating in the act of kissing); the reception at which, traditionally, all the speeches are given by men; the wife surrendering her own name and taking her husband's.

Despite decades of feminist criticism the institution resolutely endures – though not without change. The most significant change has been in the introduction of same-sex marriages and civil unions in countries such as the UK, the Netherlands,

Belgium, the Nordic countries, Ireland, Spain, France, Canada and the USA. In the USA in particular, same-sex marriage has recently been a fiercely contested and central part of political debate, with many states alternately allowing and forbidding it as the issue passed between the legislature, the judiciary, and the electorate, until the issue was settled at the federal level with a Supreme Court ruling.

If marriage is to exist as a state-recognised institution then it must, as a requirement of equality, be available to same-sex couples. There is a great deal to celebrate in recent moves to widen marriage, and it is hard not to be touched by the scenes of same-sex couples rejoicing as they are finally allowed to marry. But even these welcome reforms do not go far enough. In my latest book I advocate the end of marriage as a state-recognised institution.

As the title of the book indicates, *Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage-Free State* presents both a negative and a positive thesis. The negative thesis is a critique of the institution of marriage as it is traditionally understood, and a rejection of the state recognition of marriage in any

form. The positive thesis is an outline of a state in which personal relationships are regulated, the vulnerable are protected, and justice is furthered, all without the state recognition of marriage or any similar alternative. I call this ideal of a state which does not recognise marriage 'the marriage-free state'.

In the marriage-free state the term 'marriage' would have no legal significance. The state would not regulate the term, nor would it provide laws that dealt specifically with the creation and dissolution of marriages. 'Marriage' would be a term like 'friendship'. It would have meaning, and typically be used to denote a certain sort of relationship, but that meaning would not be a matter of legal ruling. Like friendship, marriage would mean different things to different people. Sometimes a friend is a person with whom we share our lives, meeting regularly and sharing social situations, attending events together, holidaying together, discussing all areas of life. But it is also perfectly acceptable and meaningful to use the term to denote someone with whom one has only a virtual connection, such as through social media.

Similarly, for some people marriage would be much as it is now: a formal, solemnified ceremony bringing with it weighty social meaning and norms. For others, marriage might be used casually, to denote a fleeting commitment or even a commitment to an object or a cause. As with friendship, not all uses of the word 'marriage' would succeed in achieving uptake. They would not all make sense to others. But their use would not conflict with any legal definition.

Weddings, then, would still take place in the marriage-free state. No state ceremony or registration would be involved, but weddings could persist nonetheless. The marriage-free state would place no regulations on where weddings could take place, since they would not be legal ceremonies: weddings could take place at home, on a mountaintop, in a swimming pool. But weddings could also take place exactly as they do now, in a marriage regime: in churches, temples, synagogues and mosques; in stately homes and hotels; with receptions and dresses and bridesmaids and speeches.

So the marriage-free state would still contain weddings. It would also contain monogamous, committed sexual partnerships, some of which would be called marriages by their participants and some of which would not. People would introduce each other as husband, wife, spouse, partner, lover, friend, just as they pleased. People could wear rings or not, change their names or not, call themselves Mrs or Miss or Ms. Official documentation would not distinguish between these titles other than as needed to respect people's important interests, such as when a doctor might ask how a patient preferred to be addressed while receiving treatment. But there would be nothing illegitimate in a person using marital or non-marital titles.

The marriage-free state would not recognise or endorse marriages, but nor would it leave relationships and family unregulated. In existing marriage regimes there is and must be regulation: to protect vulnerable parties, to settle matters and disputes that must be determinate in law, and to ensure justice. Regulation of personal relationships in the marriage-free state aims to ensure *equality*: between people within relationships, and also between people regardless of whether or not they are in a relationship of any particular kind.

As already noted, marriage has always been deeply gendered, a lynchpin of patriarchal societies and relations, and thus the subject of feminist criticism. But even if marriage is reformed so as to be formally equal, regardless of sex or sexuality, it still

retains inequality. Marriage is at heart a symbolic institution, one that transmits and endorses particular social meanings about the nature of love and family and the source of value. These have traditionally been sexist and heterosexist, and for many people these traditional meanings continue to taint the institution, leading them to seek alternatives such as civil partnership in order to achieve legal protection. For example, the Equal Civil Partnerships campaign calls for different-sex couples to be able to access civil partnerships on the same basis as same-sex couples.

These concerns about marriage's symbolic element must be taken very seriously, as *Against Marriage* argues in much greater detail. Still, some may argue that the meaning of marriage will eventually shift along with its legal implications. What would be wrong with state recognition of marriage then? The answer is that no amount of reform can remove another fundamental inequality of marriage, which is between married and unmarried people and their families. State-recognised marriage affords legal protection, official approbation, or both to those in certain forms of relationship and families. In doing so it makes controversial and divisive claims about value, and sets up structural inequalities based on relationship type. It is unjust for people to be given different legal status regarding matters such as immigration, taxation, property ownership, protection for caring work, insurance, pension provision, and next-of-kinship depending on their ability and willingness to participate in a particular family form, and to sanctify that relationship with a ceremony that has substantive and controversial symbolic meaning. And it is particularly problematic to tie children's life chances to the marital status of their parents.

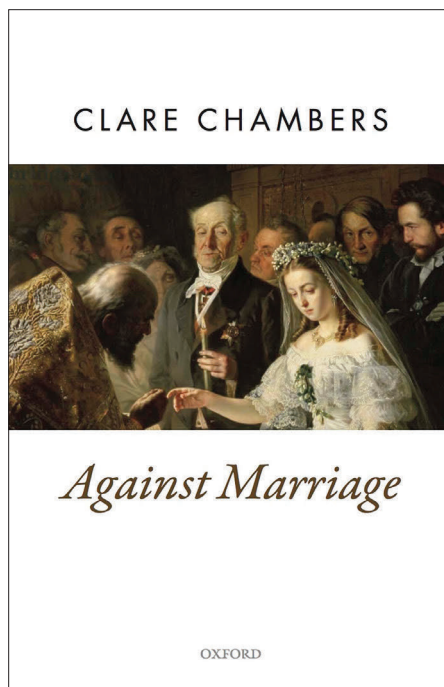
Instead, the state should provide default regulation to those participating in relationship practices, regardless of whether they have sought a special status for their relationship. The sorts of practices that are in need of regulation to protect the vulnerable and ensure justice include but are not limited to parenting, property-ownership, taxation, cohabitation, and separation. The most basic idea of the marriage-free state and the simplest way to understand it is this: the marriage-free state starts by working out what would be the just way to regulate relationships between unmarried people, and then applies that regulation to everyone.

Of course, I have my own views about the best form of regulation in many areas of family life and personal relationships. By and large, though, I do not defend them in

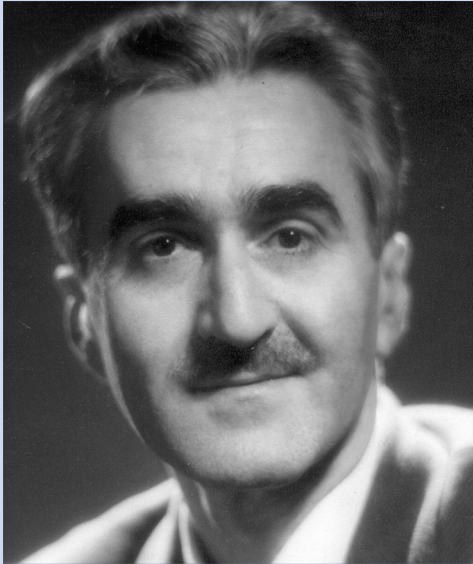
Against Marriage. The aim of the book is not to settle the question of the ideal *content* of regulation, a task that would merit several volumes in and of itself, but rather to propose a *form* or *structure* of regulation. One way to think about the structure of the marriage-free state without being distracted by dilemmas of regulatory content is to ask yourself the following questions:

What do I think is the ideal, just way of regulating unmarried people now, in a marriage regime? What laws should apply to unmarried parents, or unmarried cohabitants, or unmarried migrants, or unmarried property-owners? What would it be like if those ideal regulations were applied to everyone, regardless of marital status?

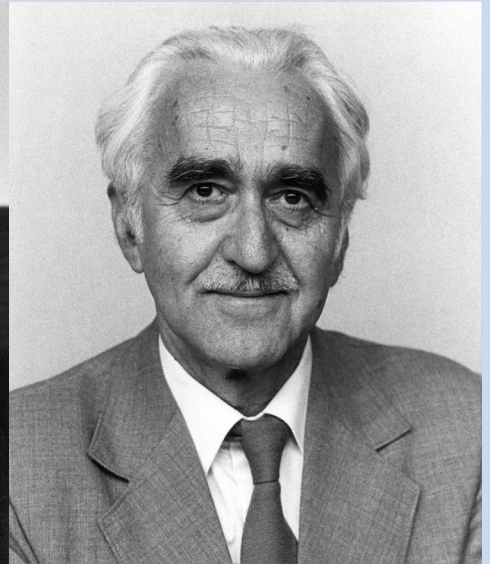
The society you envisage will be your ideal form of the marriage-free state. The most fundamental aim of *Against Marriage* is to convince the reader that she should prefer her ideal version of the marriage-free state to a marriage regime.



Clare Chambers is University Senior Lecturer at Cambridge and a Fellow of Jesus College. Her latest book *Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage-Free State* will be published by Oxford University Press in July 2017. It is currently available for pre-order from the publishers and other booksellers. Clare was also interviewed about the 'State and Marriage' on *Philosophy 24/7*. The podcast is available at: www.philosophy247.org/podcasts/marriage-state.



Casimir Lewy.



Images courtesy of Trinity College

Remembering Casimir Lewy

On 10 February 2017 the Faculty held a memorial event at Trinity College in honour of Casimir Lewy. He was a Fellow at Trinity for more than 30 years, and died in 1991 aged 71.

Talks were given by emeritus professors Simon Blackburn and Edward Craig, and a number of his former students attended. Two of Lewy's students share their memories of him below:

In 1975 I applied to read philosophy at Trinity College. I was making a mature student application and had no O or A levels nor any other qualifications (I was horribly dyslexic), so I believed my chances of getting a place were just about zero. To my surprise I was asked to attend an interview with Casimir Lewy.

I was extremely nervous during the interview, in no small part due to Casimir's ability to reveal my patchy understanding of philosophy. I did not think I had made a good impression on him, but he did say I should go away and write an extended essay on a philosophical topic of my choosing.

Having spent a few months wading through the *Tractatus*, I said I would send him 25,000 words on it within two months. "Ha ha", he said, gesturing towards me with a shaking hand, "Do you think you understand the *Tractatus*?" For some reason that I can only now put down to youthful ignorance, I replied "Yes, I think I do." "Ooh good", Casimir grinned back, "the College needs somebody who understands the

Tractatus. Indeed, the world needs somebody who understands the *Tractatus*."

I thought I had made a complete hash of the interview but nonetheless, I completed the essay and sent it to Casimir a few months later. Within a week I received a reply saying I had an unconditional offer of a place. As you might imagine, many people, especially academics and philosophers, find it hard to believe that a Fellow of Trinity College would offer a place to a hopeless dyslexic (long before it became fashionable) on the strength of a botched interview and one essay.

I have a feeling I was a slight disappointment to Casimir as I developed an interest in Continental philosophy. However, I pretty much got over that and went on to get a PhD on the philosophical problems of artificial intelligence research (again, long before it became fashionable). My gratitude to Casimir is perhaps greater than some, for he had more faith in me than I had in myself.

Dr Keith H. Tayler (Trinity 1976)

I matriculated at Trinity College in 1982 and read Philosophy. Casimir Lewy was my first Director of Studies. I was a mature student and came up to Trinity at the age of 30 years old. Prior to this I was a time-served Engineering Patternmaker having worked in the foundry industry and 'on the bench' for 12 years and had applied to Trinity whilst a student at Coleg Harlech where I was reading Philosophy and Psychology.

I can remember my interview with Casimir Lewy very clearly. I was not alone, I am sure, by being bowled over by

Cambridge, Trinity College's Great Court, and the very thought of the possibility of being a student here, and it was in this state of reverence that I rapped on his door. "Come in!" he said with a gentle warbling voice, so I did, and he invited me in to sit near him. The conversation that followed surprised me in part, as it was clear towards the end of this interview that he had few doubts I would get a degree, but it was not this that concerned him. It was because I was a mature student and he wanted to know what my plans would be post-Cambridge, were the offer to be made. I told him in all truthfulness that getting a degree had been a target for me for many years, and that achieving this would help lay to rest that almost visceral need I had had at the time. I said, if it meant I would return back to my Engineering roots, then so be it, but I knew I would be a different person.

And so it was. I took the entrance exam, was offered a place at Trinity College and got my BA degree (a 2:1) in 1985. Then followed a PhD in Computer Science in 1991, and a life in post-doctoral academic research in Artificial Intelligence, now spanning over 25 years. I will always have a debt of gratitude to Cambridge, the Faculty of Philosophy and of course Casimir Lewy for helping me on my way.

Dr David A. Randell (Trinity 1982)

Recordings of the talks given at this event are available from: <http://sms.csx.cam.ac.uk/collection/2419526>. If you have a memory of Casimir Lewy to share we'd be delighted to hear from you!

The meaning of religion

Tim Crane



Most philosophical discussions of religious belief focus on the question of its truth, and contemporary philosophers (in this country at least) have tended to press a rigorously atheist answer. The question of the meaning of religious belief, rather than its truth, is perhaps less discussed in recent analytic philosophy. But this question – what does it really mean to be a religious believer? – is surely as important as the question of truth.

Some may say this is not a philosophical question – and of course they are right that one cannot speculate about the nature of religious belief in a purely *a priori* manner. But we can speculate nonetheless, as many atheist philosophers and scientists have done, and the fact that our speculation should be constrained by the empirical facts does not stop it from being philosophical. And given the centrality of the phenomenon of religious belief in the world today, atheists should be interested in what it means as much as what (if any) of it is true.

Recent atheist discussions of religion have tended to treat it as if it were chiefly a theory of the universe, or a cosmology, combined with some moral precepts perhaps relating to life after death. Two things are hard to fit into this picture of religion: first, the fact that at the heart of most religion is a collection of practices (only one of the Five Pillars of Islam, for example, is a cosmological claim); and second, that religions essentially involve community with others – as Émile Durkheim put it, a religion is something

that you belong to, not just something you believe. How should we incorporate these features into a full picture of religious belief?

In my forthcoming book, *The Meaning of Belief*, I try and answer this question, by returning to some classic works of writers like Durkheim and William James. I argue that although religions tend to involve an explicit cosmological element, this is not the totality of the religious world view. This world view should rather be seen as a combination of two attitudes. One is what I call the ‘religious impulse’, a sense of the transcendent, of there being *more to it all than just this*. The other is an attitude of identification with other people: belonging to a historical tradition, and making sense of the world through ritual and custom as an expression of this tradition. My claim is that the link between these two attitudes is given by the phenomenon of the sacred: sacred objects, words and rituals point towards a supposed transcendent reality, while in religious practices they also link believers to those in the past and present who share their belief. In my book I argue that these ideas form the basis of a more realistic picture of religious belief than that provided by many atheists.

The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View will be published by Harvard University Press in the Autumn of 2017.

New Directions Project

Alexander Greenberg

What is it to think about something? This apparently simple question raises many issues. For example, it seems a truism that when someone thinks, there is something they are thinking about. But some of the things we think about exist and some don't. Furthermore, there are truths and falsehoods about the non-existent things we think about. For example, it is true that Vulcan was postulated by Le Verrier, and false that it was postulated by Stephen Hawking. But this creates a puzzle, because Vulcan doesn't exist, and so is not part of reality. How can there be truths about things that are not part of reality?

This problem is often discussed in linguistic or logical terms. For example, it's often thought to be a problem specifically raised by non-referring names (e.g. 'Vulcan') or by how so-called negative existentials (e.g. 'Vulcan does not exist') can be true. But this linguistic and logical machinery can distract us from what's really at issue. The real problem of non-existence is primarily about how the human capacity for thought enables us to think about things that don't exist.

This is an example of the approach of the New Directions in the Study of the Mind project, led by Tim Crane, and supported by The John Templeton Foundation. It has aimed to move beyond the logical and linguistic machinery that often dominates philosophical debates about the mind. We have instead concentrated on studying the mental phenomena of thought and consciousness themselves, and the role they play in our mental lives, in a creative reinterpretation of Husserl's rallying cry, "Back to the things themselves!".

So far, the project has involved two workshops, one on consciousness and one on intentionality, and a series of seminars. We still have some upcoming events taking place in Cambridge. Tim Crane will be giving a public lecture, *Is the Mind a Physical Thing?*, on 17th May, and our project's capstone event, *The Human Mind Conference*, takes place 27th-29th June. Do come along! For more details, visit www.newdirectionsproject.com.

People

Staff news

Professor Emerita, **Onora O'Neill** was awarded the Norwegian Holberg Prize for outstanding contributions to research in the arts and humanities for her influential role in ethical and political philosophy.

Prof Tim Crane gave the 2017 EJ Lowe lecture at the University of Durham and will give the Frege lectures in Tartu University, Estonia in June 2017. He recently appeared on the BBC *Philosopher's Arms* programme in a discussion of whether Jaffa Cakes are cakes or biscuits. It is available here: www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-38985820

Dr Arif Ahmed was promoted to Reader in philosophy.

Dr Tim Button was promoted to a Senior Lectureship. In January 2017 he gave a public lecture at the Royal Institute of Philosophy called 'I disappear'. It is available at: <https://youtu.be/sUMi6vkMnNs>

Prof Rae Langton gave many talks including the Knox Lecture at St Andrews, the Kissel Lecture in Ethics at Harvard University, the Annual Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture and the Mind Association Lecture in Cambridge.

Dr Clare Chambers became a Trustee of the charity Genital Autonomy, which campaigns against the unnecessary genital cutting of children. She is also a member of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics Working Party on Cosmetic Procedures, which is due to report this summer.

Angela Breitenbach gave a TEDx talk in May 2016 on 'Can theories be beautiful?'. It is available from: <https://youtu.be/ZZE3m6wbccI>.

Appointments

Dr Chris Cowie has a permanent Lectureship at Durham University starting in September 2017.

Dr Sophia Connell has been appointed to a permanent Lectureship at Birkbeck College, London.

We are delighted that a number of our recent graduates have been appointed to academic posts. **Nora Heinzelmann** has been appointed to an assistant professorship at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich, Germany. **Ali Boyle** has been appointed as Junior Research Fellow at Trinity Hall.

Georgie Statham has been appointed to a Polonsky Postdoctoral Fellowship, at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

Lukas Skiba has been appointed to one-year Postdoc at the University of Hamburg. **Shyane Siriwardena** has a 2-year Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Leeds. **Carlo Rossi** has a 2-year International Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at Cambridge; and **Dan Brigham** has been appointed as Teacher of Philosophy at St Paul's School, London.

Student Prizes

Joshua Gottlieb (St Edmund's) was awarded the Matthew Buncombe prize for best overall achievement in the MPhil. The Craig Taylor prize for best performance in the Tripos went to **Christopher Masterman** (Peterhouse) for Part IB, and **Jack Harding** (Trinity) for Part II.

Future Events

Routledge Lecture in Philosophy
26 May 2017

Prof Peter Singer (Princeton and Melbourne Universities) will give a public lecture on 'The Point of View of the Universe: Defending Sidgwick's Ethics'. Bookings can be made from the Faculty website.

Alumni Festival 2017
23 September 2017

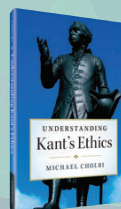
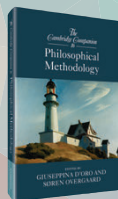
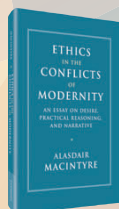
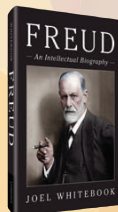
Dr Clare Chambers will give a talk entitled 'Should the state recognise marriage?'. Further details will be available from: www.alumni.cam.ac.uk.

Cambridge Festival of Ideas 2017
16 October – 29 October 2017
Please see the Festival website: www.festivalofideas.cam.ac.uk for further details.

Information about other forthcoming events is available from the Faculty website: www.phil.cam.ac.uk/events.

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Your comments and contributions are always welcome. Please send them to the Editor at:

Mrs Jenni Lecky-Thompson
Faculty of Philosophy
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge, CB3 9DA
email: jel52@cam.ac.uk

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